

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8505

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3644

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PER, LE, ASEC
SUBJECT: SECURITY AT BEIRUT

1. ONE WEEK AFTER MY RETURN, I CAN ONLY CONFESS TO CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN LEBANON. AT THIS WRITING, MOST OF BEIRUT AND NORTH LEBANON HAVE BEEN DECLARED OFF LIMITS TO OUR PERSONNEL (EXCEPT WHEN ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS) AND THERE IS A GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT SOMETHING UNPLEASANT IS GOING TO HAPPEN AS A RESULT OF THE EHDEN MASSACRE. MEANWHILE, LIFE IN BEIRUT GOES ON VERY MUCH AS USUAL, ON THE SURFACE, THAT IS. PEOPLE HAVE BECOME USED TO LIVING UNDER STRESS, AS THE PRIME MINISTER SAYS, BUT THEY ARE VERY NERVOUS NEVERTHELESS.

2. I HOPE WE CAN PASS THE SUMMER WITHOUT INCIDENTS INVOLVING AMERICANS, BUT BELIEVE A MAJOR FACTOR IN OUR DOING SO WILL BE OUR ABILITY TO MINIMIZE OUR PRESENCE HERE. I THEREFORE PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING GROUND RULES:

(A) NO ADDITIONAL MINOR DEPENDENTS TO BE PERMITTED TRAVEL TO BEIRUT. AT THIS MOMENT THERE ARE EIGHT HERE, OF
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WHOM TWO WILL BE LEAVING PERMANENTLY THIS SUMMER AND TWO WILL BE LEAVING TO GO TO SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES. WHETHER THE LATTER WILL BE PERMITTED TO RETURN FOR CHRISTMAS VACATION WILL DEPEND ON THE SITUATION AT THAT TIME. THE FOUR OTHERS--ONE MALIK, ONE ANDERSON CHILD AND TWO PETERSON (AID CONTRACT EMPLOYEE)--WOULD REMAIN HERE WITH THEIR PARENTS.

(B) ADULT DEPENDENTS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO TRAVEL TO THE POST AT THE OPTION OF THE PRINCIPAL.

(C) NO MORE TDY VISITS EXCEPT FOR ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL PURPOSES. THIS WOULD MEAN, FOR INSTANCE, FEWER, IF ANY, AUDITORS, PERSONNEL SURVEY TEAMS, AMERICAN SPECIALISTS, ETC. WE WOULD EXAMINE EACH CASE ON ITS MERITS, BUT WOULD APPLY STRICTER STANDARDS THAN WE HAVE BEEN APPLYING THE LAST YEAR. I FIND, IN THIS REGARD, THAT WE HAVE 17 PEOPLE HERE ON TDY AT PRESENT. THIS COMPARES WITH A PERMANENT COMPLEMENT OF 38, NOT COUNTING MSG'S.

(D) ABSOLUTELY NO FURTHER AUGMENTATION IN PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED PERSONNEL, AND CLOSE EXAMINATION OF EACH POSITION AS IT IS BEING VACATED ON NORMAL TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL TO SEE WHETHER IT CAN BE ABOLISHED WITHOUT UNDULY HAMPERING OUR OPERATION.

(E) REDUCING NORMAL TOUR TO 18 MONTHS AND REDUCING NUMBER OF VISITATION TRIPS ACCORDINGLY.
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